

## On Track With MDT



For the past several weeks, I have struggled with how to explain the needs of this state's transportation system to the public.

I, more than anyone, know how fortunate Montana is to have been treated kindly by the last two reauthorization bills. With TEA-21, for example, our annual federal-funding apportionment increased approximately \$100 million each year. Because Montana, like so many states, faced serious system-wide needs, those

dollars were vital to maintaining our transportation infrastructure, and we have worked diligently toward that end for the past six years.

That's the good news. The not-so-good news is that we have a long list of system needs that go beyond our current level of funding—a list of unfunded projects that, as of September 30, totaled \$434.7 million. Please note that this list does not include projects for which we are seeking Congressional earmarks, i.e., the Billings and Kalispell bypasses and the Marysville and Ekalaka roads. We will continue applying for discretionary funds for these projects.

For those wondering how we came up with the \$434.7 million number, let me explain. Each year, MDT prepares a tentative construction program for the next five years, which means that the latest compilation addresses system needs through federal fiscal year 2008. Projects are tentatively programmed based on need, public input, and dollars available by district and category: Interstate Maintenance, or IM; National Highway System, or NHS; state primary, state secondary; and so forth. All projects in the tentative construction program are at some point in the preconstruction process and, at this point at least, we are juggling projects around each year in an effort to address the most urgent needs first.

So where do we stand in terms of our infrastructure? Overall, our Interstate System is in pretty good shape. The real concern for the foreseeable future pertains to our NHS, Primary, and Secondary routes, for they bear the brunt of programmed projects with a shortfall of funds. And the bad news is that we are faced with having to push some of these projects back further and further.

Not surprisingly, that raises serious concerns for the traveling public. First, of course, there is the very real need to rehabilitate or reconstruct aging roads and provide what we consider an acceptable level of service for the next 20 to 30 years.

Second, there is the frustration we all experience when new concerns arise and we have to tell people that we can't even consider project x or project y until we can address some of the system needs already identified. When that happens, people tend to think that we are being bureaucratic or rigid or that we don't think a certain project has merit, but the truth is much more simple—we have projects already identified that have to take precedence. We will always be glad to address public concerns and incorporate new projects into our long-range plan, but the reality is that we have many serious needs already identified, and we must address them first.

Now for more good news. Addressing those needs first could very well be made easier under the pending federal reauthorization, and we once again owe a debt of gratitude to our congressional delegation—and their highly capable staff—for their work toward that end: Senator Baucus for his work on the Environment and Public Works Committee Bill, Senator Burns for all his help with appropriations, and Congressman Rehberg for the instrumental role he played in developing the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Bill. If recent reports are any indication, Montana could very well be blessed with another substantial increase in our federal allocation, which we will use diligently to address the needs discussed above. I want to thank Senator Baucus, Senator Burns, Congressman Rehberg and their staff for making this possible, and I encourage you to do the same.

If I could leave you with one thought, it would be that MDT remains committed to providing a quality transportation system. Doing so is key to staying "on track," both with the traveling public and with all those who work so hard to make our state the great place it is.

Please travel safely this holiday season.

Dave Galt  
Director



# 2003 Public and Stakeholder Surveys

Results of the 2003 *Biennial TranPlan 21 Public Telephone Survey* indicate Montana residents are moderately satisfied with most transportation system components and are increasingly satisfied with MDT's customer service. The survey was the fifth since MDT began the surveys as part of its public involvement process in 1994.

The Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Montana conducted the telephone survey of over 900 Montana residents. As with previous surveys, interviewers asked residents for their opinions about a variety of the issues including satisfaction with the transportation system, need for additional services or facilities, perceived problems, and MDT customer service.

Montana residents continue to give the highest marks to Montana airports and Interstate Highways. (See graph on right.) Out-of-state air service and other major highways received the next highest marks while passenger rail and taxi service trailed the list of 16 components. Since 1994, satisfaction levels with bicycle pathways, other major highways, and pedestrian walkways have increased the most with increases of 30%, 18%, and 14%, respectively.

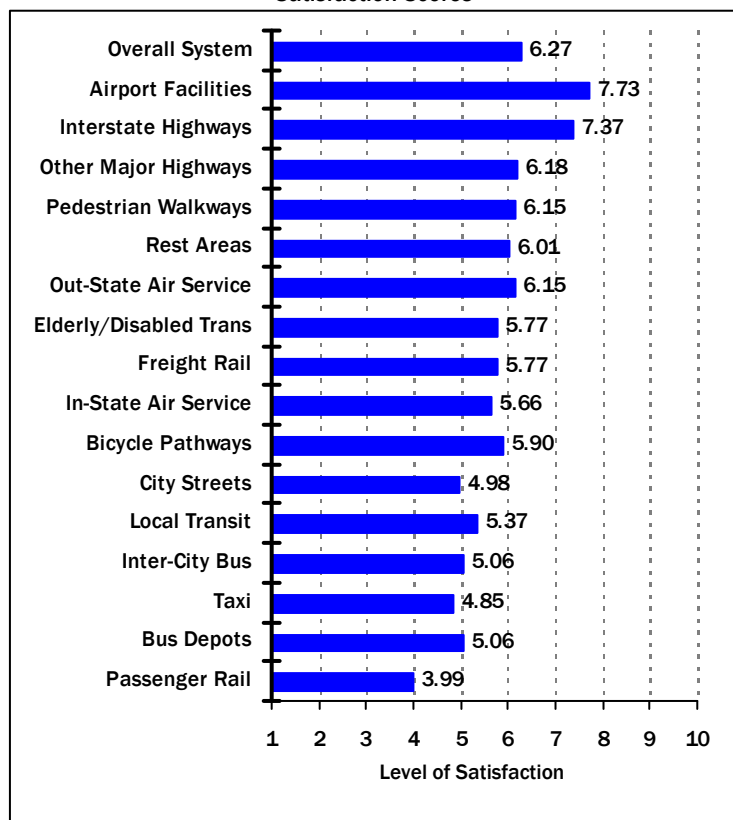
The survey also demonstrated the wide diversity of Montana issues and opinions. For example, 73% of western Montana residents listed traffic congestion as a moderate or serious problem compared to 22% of eastern Montana residents. Eastern Montana residents also considered the number of single occupancy vehicles on our highways as a much smaller problem than did residents of western Montana.

When asked to grade the quality of MDT's customer service, 58.3% of respondents gave MDT an A or B. This compares to 56.7% in 2001. In addition, 59.2% of the respondents gave MDT an A or B when asked to grade the quality of MDT's service now compared to five years ago. This compares to a response of 53.7% to the same question in 2001. Only 3.4% of all respondents gave MDT a grade of D or F in the quality of service now compared to the quality of service five years ago.

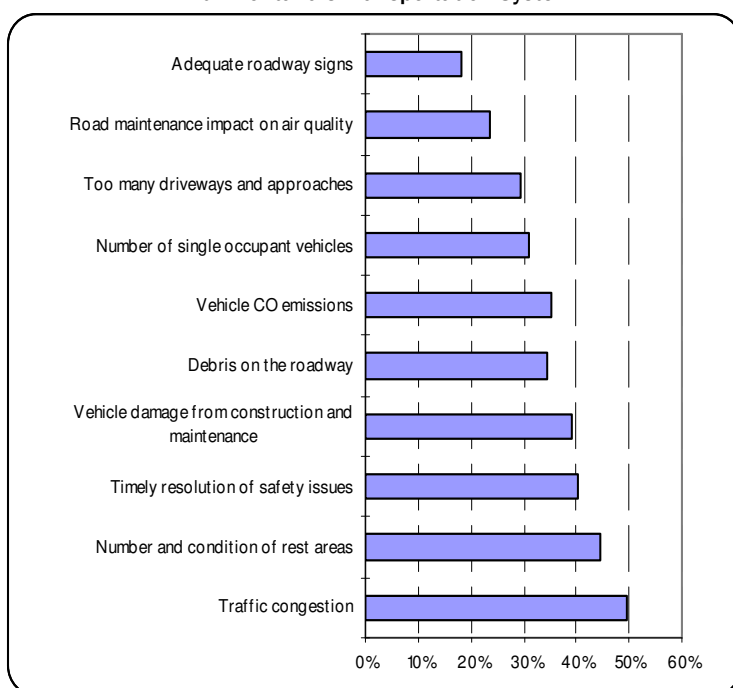
As in previous survey years, MDT also conducted a companion mail-out survey of members of key transportation stakeholder groups. The groups include freight industry, passenger transportation, city officials, environmental organizations, county officials, and tribal governments. In addition to the questions in the telephone survey, the stakeholder survey included questions specific to each groups' interests. Although there was wide variation between groups, the stakeholder groups generally expressed a higher level of satisfaction with Montana's transportation system than did the general public.

For more information on the 2003 *TranPlan 21 Public and Stakeholder Surveys*, visit [www.mdt.state.mt.us/departments/transportation\\_planning/tranplan21](http://www.mdt.state.mt.us/departments/transportation_planning/tranplan21) or contact Kristine Christensen at 444-9240 or [krchristensen@state.mt.us](mailto:krchristensen@state.mt.us).

2003 Transportation System Satisfaction Scores



2003 Telephone Survey  
Percent of Perceived Moderate or Serious Problems  
With Montana's Transportation System



# Crossing the Wide Missouri

One doesn't normally associate ferryboats with Big Sky Country, yet Montana's portion of the Missouri River is home to three ferryboats. The Carter Ferry, 6 miles south of Carter, is the only way for motorists to cross the Missouri River between Great Falls and Fort Benton. The Virgelle Ferry, 15 miles south of Big Sandy, is the only direct route from Big Sandy to Geraldine. And, the McClelland Ferry, 15 miles north of Winifred, is the Missouri River crossing for Blaine County.

MDT plans to replace the 60-year-old ferries this spring. Rehbein Transport Inc. of Plains is building all three vessels for a total cost of \$891,090. Delivery will start in May of 2004, and the last ferry is scheduled for delivery on June 30, 2004.

The new ferries will have the same profile and shape as the existing ferries but will be slightly larger and made of more durable materials. Like the existing ferries, the new vessels will be pulled across the river by a cable connected to towers on both sides. A second cable keeps the boats from floating downstream. A 17-horsepower diesel engine will provide the power.

MDT will let a contract to reconstruct the ferry facilities in January 2004. Construction should start in the spring and continue through fall. The towers will be built first so the new ferries can be operating by July 4th. The remaining facilities, including improved access roads, new restrooms, information centers, and dwellings for the operators, should be finished by the fall.

Approximately 88% of the funding for this project comes from federal funds, 8% from state funds, and 4% from the counties. Federal funding was obtained through multiple congressional earmarks over the last several years.



*Two views of the Virgelle Ferry. (Photographs courtesy of Rehbein Transport Inc.)*

## Straehl Named Planning Administrator



On September 20 Director Dave Galt named Sandra Straehl Administrator of MDT's Rail, Transit and Planning Division. Sandy replaces Patricia Saindon who retired on September 5.

A graduate of the University of Wisconsin and Montana State University, Sandy was most recently chief of MDT's Program and Policy Analysis Bureau. Sandy's previous positions during her 18 years at

MDT and the Montana Department of Highways have included supervisor of the Urban Planning Section and chief of the Planning and Statistics Bureau.

Sandy's accomplishments at MDT include the development of the Systems Impact Analysis Process and the nationally recognized Performance Programming Process. She is also MDT's expert on federal transportation legislation and is a member of several Transportation Research Board committees and task forces. As a national expert on asset management, Sandy has co-chaired two national conferences on the subject. In addition, Sandy is a member of the Standing Committee on Planning for the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

Sandy's dedication to Montana's transportation program has earned her employee excellence awards from two Montana governors.

Sandy can be contacted at 444-7692 or [sstraehl@state.mt.us](mailto:sstraehl@state.mt.us).



## Montanans Participate in Walk to School Day

On October 8, Montanans joined kids and parents from around the world to celebrate International Walk to School Day. Schools, children, teachers, parents, community leaders, and local volunteers all across Montana walked to promote physical activity; teach safe walking skills to children; reduce traffic congestion, pollution, and vehicle speeds near schools; and to share time with community leaders, parents, and children. Walk to School Day events teach kids and parents to think of walking as an active, safe, and healthy means of transportation.

This year an estimated 3,000 schools in all 50 states participated in Walk to School Day activities. Four governors, including Montana Governor Judy Martz, and dozens of mayors also took part. Internationally, children from 28 countries including Argentina, New Zealand, Greece, India, and Nigeria, joined the celebration. Both President George Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair sent messages of support.

For more information on Walk to School Day, including tips on organizing an event in your community, go to [www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org).



*A stellar mascot leads Head Start walkers through Helena's walking mall (top left) and across Sixth Avenue (above).*



*Participants make their way past St. Helena Cathedral to Central School.*

## Safety Tips for Walkers and Bikers

Here are some safety reminders to help ensure enjoyable, safe outings. Remember that children under the age of 10 may have difficulty judging speed and distance accurately, and very young children may not be able to read street and pedestrian signs. Know your own child's ability because all children develop uniquely.

### Walking Safety

Practice and remind children to . . .

- Walk on a sidewalk when available. If there is no sidewalk and you have to walk on the road, face the traffic so you can see cars coming, and keep close to the curb.
- Cross only at corners or marked crosswalks. Use a crosswalk button when possible. Wait for the light to indicate that it is safe to cross.
- Stop at the curb or edge of the road, look left, then right, and then left again before you

step out onto the street.

- If a car is parked where you are crossing, make sure there is no driver in the car. Then go to the edge of the car and look left-right-left.

- If there is a crossing guard, let the guard stop the traffic and then signal you to cross. Don't go out into the intersection before the guard signals.
- Walk at a normal pace, not too slow and not running.

### Bicycling Safety

Practice and remind children to . . .

- Always wear a helmet that is properly fitted and that complies with Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines.\*
- Ride on the right side of the road or path in single file and come to a complete stop before crossing streets.
- Always use proper hand signals when turning and when stopping.
- Be courteous to pedestrians.
- Use a bicycle bell or call out to alert pedestrians that you are passing ("Bike on your left.").

*\*The Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute is a good source of information on bike helmets. Their Web site at [www.helmets.org](http://www.helmets.org) includes information on how to fit and buy a helmet. You can also contact them by phone at (703)486-0100.*



# Be Seen and Be Safe!

With increased hours of darkness during winter and early fall, here are a few safety tips from the National Highway Traffic Safety Institute:

During the day and at dawn, dusk, and other low-light conditions, “fluorescent” colors like blaze orange, hot pink, and day-glo green are great. Attaching a strip of fluorescent material to a coat, around an arm, to bicycle handlebars, or to a backpack or purse will draw a driver’s eye to that flash of color. Even though fluorescent colors are noticeable during the day or in low-light conditions, they are nearly worthless at night.

At night, lights do more than any other device to increase one’s odds of being seen. Lights, combined with clothing and equipment, create a distinctive image and also help to illumi-

nate the path ahead for pedestrians. Leg lights or a flashing LED light combined with a reflectorized or retroreflectorized (materials that reflect light back to its source) vest is also effective.

Another effective way for pedestrians to be seen is by the use of reflective and retroreflective materials on clothing, backpacks, briefcases, purses, and other items. Reflective and retroreflective materials reflect light back to its source and are even used to make stop signs and pedestrian markings. But remember, while retroreflective materials are more effective than reflective materials, both lose their effectiveness during the day.

Remember, be seen and be safe!

## CTEP Project Spotlight

### A Tunnel for River’s Edge Trail

*by Andrew Finch, City of Great Falls*



In 1988, the city of Great Falls obtained former rail-road right-of-way near the Missouri River and began to develop its award-winning River’s Edge Trail. Since then, the trail has

grown to include 12 miles of paved trail. Initially, a portion of the trail crossed Giant Springs Road on the outskirts of Great Falls. Giant Springs Road was then a low-volume roadway serving Giant Springs Heritage State Park, Giant Springs Fish Hatchery, and the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Region 4 Headquarters. A CTEP project in the mid-1990s extended the trail eastward, from Giant Springs Road through the state park, to scenic overlooks at Rainbow Dam and Crooked Falls. Later, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center was built about a mile from the trail crossing bringing additional traffic to the roadway.

By 2001, trail users were crossing Giant Springs Road approximately 60,000 times a year. After comments from various trail users on the potential danger of the intersection, the city of Great Falls and Recreational Trails, Inc., (a non-profit trail support group) decided to do something about it.

Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) funds were secured in 2001 to construct a separated-grade crossing at Giant Springs Road. The project included hiring an

engineering consultant to design and oversee construction of a cement, box-culvert tunnel under the road so that trail users could avoid the potentially dangerous crossing. The project also allowed access to the trail from both the east and west sides of Giant Springs Road. Upgrading existing guardrail to current standards was a late addition to the project. Other minor items included a gravel turnout area for an informational kiosk, as well as seeding the area with native plants, drainage treatment, trail paving, etc.

The project engineer, Morrison Maierle of Helena, designed the project. The contractor, Schumaker Trucking & Excavating Contractors of Great Falls, performed the work smoothly, professionally, and on schedule. From beginning to end, the project took two years and cost approximately \$237,000, including about \$205,000 in CTEP funds and almost \$32,000 in local matching funds. Completed in October 2003, the trail now allows for safe travel to and from the interpretive center, Region 4 Headquarters, the fish hatchery, and the state park. The city of Great Falls and Recreational Trails, Inc., took a proactive approach to pedestrian and bicycle safety, and trail users in Great Falls have clearly benefited from this unique source of funding.





## **Gait'n on the Gallatin Gateway**

*by Richard Knatterud, CTEP Bureau*

It just wasn't safe for kids to walk to school along U.S. 191 near Gallatin Gateway. Schoolchildren and other walkers used a rocky dirt trail along the bottom of the borrow pit as a transportation corridor. At Cottonwood Creek and Farmer's Canal, they had to climb onto the highway to cross bridges, coming dangerously close to cars and trucks traveling as fast as 70 mph. Part of the solution to this problem was to build a pedestrian path along U.S. 191.

Gallatin County used CTEP funds to design and construct a 1.5-mile, asphalt-surfaced pedestrian path along the east side of U.S. 191 between Rabel Lane and Zachariah Lane. Two pedestrian bridges were installed: one at Cottonwood Creek and the other at Farmer's Canal. Construction was substantially completed in the fall of 2002. Stahly Engineering and Associates designed the project, which was constructed by Hall Construction.

The project was and continues to be a community effort. The Gallatin Tunnel and Trail Project Citizen Committee and the Gallatin Gateway Youth Group worked together to raise matching funds. The Gallatin Gateway School District and the Gateway Youth Group maintain the trail. Special recognition should go to Gallatin County officials as well as Alice Jones, Brad Flategraff, and other members of the Citizen Committee for their part in making this project happen.

Public participation prior to construction included three public hearings by the Gallatin County Commissioners, TV news spots, radio public service announcements, newspaper stories and editorials, newsletters, flyers, posters, and public meetings. Senator Max Baucus wrote a letter of support to the Gallatin County Commissioners.

Their efforts were rewarded with a groundbreaking ceremony on September 25, 2002, and a dedication ceremony on November 25, 2002. Some benches and landscaping may be added to the trail in the future. There are also plans for a pedestrian tunnel underneath U.S. 191, near Rabel Lane, using National Highway System funds. This tunnel will help school kids cross the highway on their way to and from classes at Gallatin Gateway School.

This project demonstrates how positive results occur when a community pulls together to get things done. Way to go!

CTEP is the Community Transportation Enhancement Program. For more information, contact acting Bureau Chief Richard Knatterud at 444-9409 or [rknatterud@state.mt.us](mailto:rknatterud@state.mt.us).

*Farmer's Canal before . . .*



*and after . . .*



### **U.S. 2 Update**

For information on U.S. Highway 2 issues including a corridor map, Environmental Impact Statement information, and the economic benefit-cost analysis, check the following Web site:

[www.mdt.state.mt.us/us2info](http://www.mdt.state.mt.us/us2info)

# Snow, Ice and Magnesium Chloride

## Winter Maintenance in Montana



It's that dreaded time of year again, when snow-packed and icy roads can make travel an unpleasant and potentially unsafe experience. In the past, MDT winter maintenance

crews relied heavily on plowing and applying salt/sand mixtures to snow-packed and icy roadways. Times have changed. Better alternatives are available, changing the way MDT maintenance crews perform their task of ensuring safety while reducing negative impacts to the environment.

MDT's current winter maintenance practice centers around the use of liquid magnesium chloride, which is a salt compound with added corrosion inhibitors. This product can prevent and remove ice and snow buildup on roads. Magnesium chloride works like antifreeze by lowering the freezing temperature of water and preventing ice from forming a strong bond to the road. It helps keep roads from becoming snow-packed, improves safety, and reduces accidents.

Magnesium chloride is applied at different times and in different amounts, depending on what it is supposed to accomplish. As an anti-icing agent, a light application is applied to the road in the early stages of a storm to prevent a hard bond of ice, reduce snow buildup, and speed snow and ice breakup after the storm. When it is used as a de-icer, magnesium chloride is

applied to remove a thin layer of snow-pack or ice already on the road. It is very effective in melting black ice and light layers of freezing rain. When magnesium chloride is used as a prewetting agent, it is added to traditional sanding material, which helps keep the sand from blowing to the shoulder of the road.

Oftentimes people wonder why their roads aren't cleared after a storm as quickly as other roads in the area. The decisions MDT makes in determining which roads to clear first are based on three factors:

1. Traffic volumes
2. Safety and environmental considerations
3. Availability of manpower and equipment resources

When a storm covers a large area, resources can be stretched beyond available limits. In these situations, a system of priorities is followed to provide the best service. Interstates and roads with high volumes of traffic are top priority and are cleared first, followed by roads with lower volumes of traffic.

MDT's quest for safe winter roads requires approximately 700 trained employees working to clear ice, slush, and snow from Montana's 25,000 lane miles of highway. The workers use a variety of winter maintenance vehicles including snowplows, prewet systems, spreaders, loaders, liquid distribution systems, and rotary snowplows. If a snowstorm were to cover the entire state, snowplows would travel the equivalent of two times around the earth while clearing the roads, and the job would be done within 24 hours.

For more information on magnesium chloride or snow removal, contact Dan Williams at 444-7604 or [dawilliams@state.mt.us](mailto:dawilliams@state.mt.us). Additional winter maintenance information is available on the Internet at [www.mdt.state.mt.us/departments/maintenance](http://www.mdt.state.mt.us/departments/maintenance).

## View the Road Before You Go

### MDT's Winter Driving Resources:

Winter driving can be a daunting proposition, but MDT has a number of resources to help you decide whether to venture out and, if you do, which route to take.

Internet users can view color pictures of actual road conditions on the MDT Traveler Information Web site, [www.mdt.state.mt.us/travinfo](http://www.mdt.state.mt.us/travinfo). (Click on the word *Cameras* in the menu bar.) MDT road cameras take photos of the roadway at key locations throughout the state. The images are updated every 30 minutes.

The Traveler Information site also provides general information about Montana's road and weather conditions as well as specific, real-time data from 59 Road and Weather Information System sites across Montana. (Click on *RWIS* in the menu bar.)

Route-specific reports are also available by dialing 511, the new national traveler information number. Motorists can call this number 24-hours a day to get current information on driving conditions, weather forecasts, road closures, and major delays.

Road reports are also available at the following numbers:

1-800-226-ROAD (7623)

1-800-335-7592 (TTY)



*These pictures, taken by MDT road cameras, show surface conditions at 10:15 a.m. on December 10. The road to the left is U.S. 2 at Crystal Creek. The road at right is MT 200 at Lewistown Divide.*

## *Inside this issue:*

On Track With MDT.....	1
2003 Public and Stakeholder Surveys.....	2
Crossing the Wide Missouri .....	3
Straehl Named Planning Administrator.....	3
Montanans Participate in Walk to School Day.....	4
Safety Tips for Walkers and Bikers.....	4
Be Seen and Be Safe! .....	5
A Tunnel for River's Edge Trail.....	5
Gait'n on the Gallatin Gateway .....	6
U.S. 2 Update.....	6
Snow, Ice and Magnesium Chloride .....	7
View the Road Before You Go .....	7

## *Rail, Transit & Planning Telephone Numbers*

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call 800-714-7296 (in Montana only) or 406-444-3423. The TTY number is 406-444-7696 or 800-335-7592.

Administrator (Sandra Straehl).....	444-7692
.....sstraehl@state.mt.us	
Bike/Pedestrian (Carol Strizich).....	444-9273
.....cstrizich@state.mt.us	
CTEP (Richard Knatterud, acting).....	444-9409
.....rknatterud@state.mt.us	
Map Orders.....	444-6119
Multimodal Planning (Dick Turner).....	444-7289
.....dturner@state.mt.us	
Projects (Gary Larson).....	444-6110
.....glarson@state.mt.us	
Secondary Roads (Wayne Noem).....	444-6109
.....wnoem@state.mt.us	
Road Data & Mapping (Zia Kazimi).....	444-6111
.....zkazimi@state.mt.us	
Traffic Data (Dan Bisom) .....	444-6122
.....dbisom@state.mt.us	
Transit .....	444-7289
.....dturner@state.mt.us	
Statewide & Urban Planning (Lynn Zanto).....	444-3445
.....lzanto@state.mt.us	
Newsline Editor (Dawn McCallum) .....	444-6115
.....dmccallum@state.mt.us	

*Newsline is a quarterly publication of the Rail, Transit and Planning Division, Montana Department of Transportation.*

6,644 copies of this public document were published at an estimated cost of 77¢ per copy for a total of \$5,114 which includes \$3,337 for printing and \$1,777 for distribution. Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided upon request. For further information call (406)444-6331. The TTY number is (406)444-7696 or (800)335-7592.

*MDT's mission is to serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality and sensitivity to the environment.*

### **Rail, Transit & Planning Division Montana Department of Transportation**

2701 Prospect Avenue  
P.O. Box 201001  
Helena, Montana 59620-1001  
800-714-7296



Pre Sort Standard  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Helena, MT  
Permit No. 141